

THE MANTLE

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THE MANTLE

#8

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Mela Blust

of the finally dawn

i named each night with you
like a great lost city, or a burning nebula
this one zion
some other star-bitten haven,
"ghost of jupiter"
we placed the tabs on our tongues
and dove for cat's eye stones in the creek.
at three i smoked while
you hugged yourself good night.
once, we walked hand in hand
down the middle of the highway
like a dare to god, or a prayer:
please, come collect your earthchild.
when the sun threatened,
we laid still until
the moons swirled around us
our eyes glittery, hand-drawn jewels
before the gift of the finally dawn.

Mela Blust is a moonchild, and has always had an affinity for the darkness. Her poems have appeared in Isacoustic, Rust+Moth, Anti Heroin Chic, and more, and more are forthcoming in The Nassau Review, Rhythm & Bones Lit and The Bitter Oleander, among others.

Lisa Folkmire

World View

We weren't lovers at all
when he asked me if I would
ever have children and I told him

I didn't think I was
necessarily maternal
like most women my age
assume they are. He said

that it probably wasn't an
environmentally sound
choice to have children
anyway as he turned his

face away from me and
over to the zoo's new polar
bear as she pushed her
head up through the water

and tried to drown a plastic
barrel with her big paws.

That summer the air
conditioned bear aquarium
was under construction

it was not such a
coincidence that
it was the hottest

Michigan summer the zoo
had lately seen. Sometimes

I forget the force of
negativity. I want you
to know that I am trying
to reach out, but I am

afraid of what might
come back.

It's like the nights when we
were together and I didn't care and as you
would reach closer and closer
I would call out louder and louder,
days before I was yelled at
for yelling in
my own messy
ecstasy.

Even the sound of
people eating gets to me
these days. The gab-smacking

sound of saliva on tongue on
teeth like a kiss when
the teeth accidentally
touch.

I want you to
know that I am tired
and concerned and I

miss the happy days,

whiskey at my side,

fingers tracing old library

books, feet toeing closer

to the river, the ripples

of brook trout reaching out

a hint of the animal pleasure
I can't let out in daylight.

I want you to know

that I am trying very
hard to remain positive.

Tiffany Belieu

Size Matters

Yes, I am fat and people have wanted me
to lose weight and said so, publicly

privately and with supposed kindness.
They tell me it is about my health

for me to be around longer, as long
as there is less of me.

All you see is my scale-
snake throat and all the things I take

into myself, food and words and worlds.
Increasing the weight of recognizing

the beauty in size -
of hips and the universe

as not mutually exclusive, babe.
Beyond a narrow world view,

Seen as sick but I'm well
rounded, and still someone

who gets fucked, knows sucking
starlight requires mass,

make room in the pew. How big
is the offering, I place two coins

on my eyes and ask passage
to places of appreciation,

to be seen as human,
beyond the desperation of shrinking.

Tiffany Belieu is working hard to make her writing dream a reality. Her work is published or forthcoming in *Meow Meow Pow Pow*, *Collective Unrest*, *The Cabinet of Heed*, and *Okay Donkey*. She loves tea and cats and can be found @tiffobot on Twitter.

Sara Rose Lieto

Bending

When I think of being okay,
I think of the hard stalk of lavender
and the way we separate the petals
to smash them into purpose.

When I look up how
to fix my muddled,
unweeded mind,
the Internet tells me to
steam lavender,
smell lavender,
rub lavender,
fuck lavender

until I become the purple,
bruised pulp so kneaded
and wet that there is
no space for anxiety

until anxiety is the mushy
soil I grow from, fertilized
by years of thought
and wet from the downpour,
my stem bending under
the weight of its flowers.

Sara Rose Lieto is a poet, artist, and software engineer based in Cambridge, MA. Outside of writing, she spends her time learning about flowers, climbing rocks, and making zines about empathy. You can find her online at www.sararoselieto.com.

Courtney Leigh

The Keeping

Tell me to pose
break bread at my back
the past held in the grit teeth of spine.
Tell me that you course through the fluid
that tap to my brain. Boy wonder,
I can't wake without you.
Can't eat cake about you.
I am breakfast & so on—
I fill you. Eat breakfast & so on
you fill me.
I take the day in tornadoes
my body in constant jagged whiplash.
I cry when I cum undone
with the buttons down my back.
Find me in the undone sutures.
I work the dead for you
wound shoveled out.
I fall for you, take the cutted wings
out my back.
I am prayer
forgiveness for
& so on

Courtney Leigh is the author of “the unrequited <3<3 of red riding hood & her lycan lover” (Dancing Girl Press, 2016). She resides in Arizona & is The Bowhunter of White Stag Publishing. She also owns & curates Crimson Sage Apothecary, hand-making ritual & altar tools, decor, & all-natural skincare.

Long Winter, New Spring

My pussy is perennial.
In soil for years,
in bloom for decades,
winding through the
wild stems of weeds
to reach the light.

My pussy is perennial
in how perennial
can be evergreen.

My perennial is peony.
Rich pink and ornamental,
all fingers in the center,
curled up in the crown,
underground through
the winter.

It's been a long winter.

My perennial remembers
when it wasn't mine at all,
when it was a root un-tangled
from the warm food of mud,
some other hands re-knotting the
stem and shucking the meat
from the bulb.

Who owns a flower
but the earth,
Anyway.

My pussy is still bud,
even after replanting;
the sun rises to remind me
that I can till my own dirt.
The soil shifts to remind me
that my perennial exists.

My pussy opens into bloom today.
In my body, my petals turn
their edges to the outside.

In my body,
it is springtime.

Sara Rose Lieto is a poet, artist, and software engineer based in Cambridge, MA. Outside of writing, she spends her time learning about flowers, climbing rocks, and making zines about empathy. You can find her online at www.sararoseliето.com.

When You Ask Me How I Am and I Almost Tell You, I Haven't Killed Myself Yet

Another outside
my body

over it all steam
and half suns, full moons
huddled together

to transform our bodies
into a single

solar eclipse, tiny invisibilities
settling somewhere above the ocean
rebellious waves learning

speech, vowels like ours
and we call it semantic
relational

and this is how the ocean
started to pray, singing waves
and for a second I

feel that desperate need to open
my fingers
and stuff the ocean inside my
legs and mouth

preserve through
a spell to take my body

instead, all these people
blowing smoke
cramming themselves
inside the ocean, the waves,
us

and these bones we know
will be taken by men
and made into an office building,
automated waste
leveraged into contractual efficiency

but we can't have that
not with the night pooling like blood
around us,

and we are stopping in closed bookstores
saying thank you

before news of the dead

our own dead, our future

find us, haunt us

under a paper sky with another moon
we don't recognize

I tell you it's hard for me to reconcile

our moons, some alien stardust

a space we remember but can't see
and these waves not being

waves anymore but what use is there
to mourn what hasn't happened yet
and all the words like thank you
that will happen in between
that will be the only thing to matter
when the waves stop crashing.

Joanna C. Valente is a human who lives in Brooklyn, New York. They are the author of *Sirs & Madams, The Gods Are Dead, Marys of the Sea, Sexting Ghosts, Xenos, No(body)* (forthcoming, Madhouse Press, 2019), and is the editor of *A Shadow Map: Writing by Survivors of Sexual Assault*. They received their MFA in writing at Sarah Lawrence College. Joanna is the founder of Yes Poetry and the senior managing editor for *Luna Luna Magazine*. Some of their writing has appeared in *The Rumpus, Them, Brooklyn Magazine, BUST*, and elsewhere. Joanna also leads workshops at Brooklyn Poets. joannavalente.com / Twitter: @joannasaid / IG: joannacvalente / FB: joannacvalente

Max Orr

Interiors

The humidifier spits clouds,
breathing all night to keep blood inside
dry bodies. In the corner, a filter
softens the edges of winter air (visions

of cat litter, mold in perforated
walls, dust). January is for boiling
water, dragging pens over yellow paper.
We listen to the furnace and quietly

love our quiet things. Together, we will
breathe all night to keep blood inside
each other. We will love wildly, glad for
softened edges of winter air.

Max Orr teaches English in Columbus, Ohio. He is the winner of the 2019 William Redding Memorial Poetry Contest, and his work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Maudlin House*, *Modern Poetry Quarterly Review*, and *Pudding Magazine*.

I am told that I have OCD

which isn't so much
the process of putting things
back in place because nothing
in my life has ever really been
in place but my brain keeps
going back to the same place
so when I tell my doctor my
leaving home time has been
at the ten minute mark
for the past three years because
I have to check the locks,
the dogs, the stove, the coffee pot,
three times in that order until I decide
to leave through the door just
to come back in to check
all cords and then the locks,
the dogs, the stove, the coffee
pot, and she smiles and says OCD
which isn't what I thought it was
at all I thought I was your basic
anxiety case because I always
check these things to see if
the house will burn down
and I thought OCD would be
more useful would keep me
in line would not result in clothes
piled all over my room but in fact
it's not useful at all in fact I find
myself just replaying words
until my face turns red
not from saying them but
from thinking them and
rehashing how many times
I ruined situations just by opening
my mouth just by staying
seated just by being in the room
I'm offsetting everything right now
so when they say I have OCD
I want to say then why is nothing
right ever why can't things go
in the correct place why can't I just
live quiet, sit back, let life go
around me. Let me sit

and stay and let nothing
bother me ever again
as I replay thoughts
of blackberries on
dirt roads, sweet juices
at summer sunsets,
the woods and how the
light filters trees. Let there
be no sudden movements,
no loud noises, let nobody say
excuse me or could you
please or move. Let my life
be an exoskeleton
to my comfort.

Lisa Folkmire is a poet and legal technical writer from Warren, Michigan. She holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts where she studied poetry. Her poems have appeared in many journals, including *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *Barren Magazine*, *Glass, Gravel*, and *Occulum*. She also has work forthcoming in *Okay Donkey*.

Rikki Angelides

Departures

this altitude remembers me
and it makes me swell every time
it wouldn't be so bad
but the snot and the tears
have no place to go
I rushed here
didn't grab a napkin at the gate
I blame my isolation
always ready to freak out families
packed up for the Bahamas
it feels planned
and I'm starting to catch on
like the altitude knows the time
like the time looks right at me
like they look right at each other
like all three of us don't have anything else to do
this will all be over
and the descent will still be wet
maybe an embarrassing reminder
that goodbye is just pre-grieving
a buffer to the possible fact
we might never greet again
good thing these flights are so expensive
good thing I have people to pre-grieve for
but goodness
time you wreck me
you move like radio
you're cold in my socks
you're on this plane and outside
you spend your money on games
and just when I catch on
you spend your money on me
I can't seem to give time enough leg room
I can't seem to give this altitude enough time
I want all of the adults I love
to never grow up
I've been waiting to join them
and now that I'm here
they're going

Rikki Angelides is a poetry MFA candidate at Emerson College. She lives in Boston, reads poetry for *Redivider*, and currently works as the Marketing Associate at *Ploughshares*. You can read her work in *OCCULUM*, *Empty Mirror*, and *VAGABOND CITY*. Find her on Instagram+Twitter: @rikki_angelides.

Submission Guidelines

The Mantle welcomes poetry submissions from you, no matter who you are or where you live.

Send your odd, poignant, beautiful poems. Send poems you're proud of, whether raw, refined, or jagged.

Submissions are read year-round. Issue cut-off dates are as follows:

July 7 for the Summer issue. (August 1st release)

October 7 for the Autumn issue. (November 1st release)

January 7 for the Winter issue. (February 1st release)

April 7 for the Spring issue. (May 1st release)

Send up to 5 previously unpublished poems of any style or length in one .doc/.docx/.pdf/.rtf/.odt file to **themantle.poetry@gmail.com** with "submission" somewhere in the subject line.

Please withhold your name from the manuscript- we prefer to not know who we are reading!

Include your name and an optional cover letter in the email. A 50-75 word third-person bio will be requested in the event we accept your work.

You may submit again after receiving a response. If your work is selected for publication, wait for the following issue to pass before submitting again.

Simultaneous submissions are encouraged. If any of your poems get accepted elsewhere before you get a response from us, send a reply to the original submission email noting which poem(s) you need to withdraw (no worries, and congrats!).

Feel free to query if you haven't received a response after 60 days.

We ask for First Serial Rights. After a poem is published here, the contributor retains all rights. If the poem is published anywhere else after, we kindly ask that you credit *The Mantle* as first publisher.

We are a non-paying market.

Thank you so much for reading! *The Mantle* is grateful for your support.